

1888]

A PICTURESQUE NOBLE

59

men, and this was not to be wondered at, for when 133
we got to our camp, at about four in the afternoon, an 132
icy wind was blowing, and the thermometer was at
forty—a few days before at the same time it had
stood at a hundred and fifteen in the shade! In the
winter the pass is very cold, but generally practicable.
We found black-currant bushes on one side of the
pass but no fruit.

Afzul-ul-Mulk's Deputy Governor, Abdulla Khan, 291
met us on the Shandur. He was one of the most 645
picturesque of all the Chitrali nobles, and on this
occasion was dressed in a loose "choga," a garment
cut like a dressing-gown, of gold brocade, covered
with a pattern of large tea roses and bouquets of
smaller flowers. The Chitrali always wears a small
turban; he was no exception, but his was almost
entirely gold. His under coat was of the brightest
Bokhara silk; his loose bright green velvet breeches
were stuffed into long Turkestan riding boots with
extravagantly high heels and square toes. He was a 223
great sportsman, and I never saw him without a hawk
on his wrist, sometimes the beautiful grey falcon, often
a smaller one to kill little birds. He rode a very fast 492
walking horse with brilliantly-decorated saddlery,
bits, headstall, stirrups, all heavily plated with silver,
and was altogether a pleasure to look upon.

Between the foot of the pass and Mastuj the 133
ground was much the same as before, and I noted a
formidable position, which Afzul said was always held
against an enemy coming from the south. A few
years later it was held by the Chitralis against Kelly's
force, which was advancing to the relief of Robertson,
who was besieged in Chitral.

1888]

THE CHITRAL RACECOURSE

87

camp, the outside being composed of Bokhara silk in broad bands of red and gold. Our first halt¹ was at Shoghot, a point at which all the roads leading over the passes mentioned above converge. We passed over the Chitrali racecourse on the way, a stretch nearly four miles long of flat ground which, once cultivated, has been ruined by floods, and is one mass of sand and stones. At the far end of the plain is a raised mound, the Mehtar's grand stand, and the course was the full distance. How any horse could survive being raced four miles over the stones is difficult to understand, but they did. Afzul-ul-Mulk amused me by saying he had a horse which was undefeated over this course, and that he much regretted he had not taken him to Calcutta and entered him at the races there, as he certainly would have won the Viceroy's Cup, the Derby of India. After passing over this open ground, the road runs through a limestone gorge, with absolutely perpendicular sides.

431
361
487
541

As it was now autumn, and the rivers had shrunk, we marched as a rule up the bed of the stream, which was crystal clear and full of fish, fording a dozen times a day with the water to our saddle-flaps. The trees were just turning, and every valley you looked up was ablaze with "the flying gold of the ruined woodland." We passed many wild duck decoys, at constructing which the Chitralis seem very clever. They run off a portion of the stream on to a flat field, making a pool twenty yards or so square, at one corner of which the water runs in. Here they make a wicker cage with a wide mouth and tunnel gradually tapering up-stream. ² [When leaving Chitral - Analyst]

132

223

- 223 They stick decoy ducks about the open water, and when the wild duck settle, drive them into the tunnel, catching sometimes two and three hundred at a time.
- 491 The bridges speak for the lightness of foot of the people; they are merely, as a rule, light hurdles of willow; our heavy-footed English labouring folk would crash through them, but they seem strong enough for the people who use them. Horses of course ford.
- 133 We reached the top of the Dorah, fourteen thousand eight hundred feet in height, without difficulty, riding practically to the top of the pass. We had a lovely day, the air was perfect, and the view from the top is fine. Immediately below you the ground drops very suddenly to the Hauz-i-Dorah, Lake Dufferin as it was christened by Lockhart's party, but the lake itself is out of sight. We
- 000 stayed a short time at the top, looking out over the Badakshan mountains towards that mysterious Central Asia which attracts by the glamour of its past history, by the veil which shrouds its future. Balkh, Bokhara, Samarkhand, what visions come trooping as their names arise! The armies of Alexander, the hordes of Gengis Khan and Timur go glittering by; dynasties and civilisations rise and fall like the waves of the sea; peace and prosperity again and again go down under the iron hoof of the conqueror; for centuries past death and decay have ruled in the silent heart of Asia. Are we now looking on the re-awakening? Shall the land again blossom like the rose, and proud cities rise on the ruins of the old under semi-European sway, and greater emperors than the Great Khan rule through centuries of generally last-

and Murikho, the upper and lower k̄ho, or valley, 133
are districts of some importance. The former, a
valley some fifty miles long and a mile wide, as
a rule shut in by huge mountains, the latter, shorter
and more open, is a continuation of the former.
The whole district is most favoured, and abounds
in fruit and flocks and herds. In Murikho there 286
are some of the only manufactures of the country,
robes woven from the wool of unborn lambs, and
others in which the down of the wild duck is inter-
mixed. The latter are more curious than useful,
and give the wearer a most fluffy and half-dressed
appearance. This sort of cloth is also made in
the upper portion of Hunza. From here come the 223
celebrated falcons still exported to India, and smaller
hawks used in the sport of falconry.

The method of catching is simple; a bird,
according to the Chitralis, must be full grown to
be of any use, and caught when ranging for food.
The trapper makes a little stone box in which he
sits, a small hole being left in the roof on which
a chicken tied by the leg moves about, the string
being in the man's hand below. After the hawk
or falcon has seized his victim, the string is gently
pulled, and, thinking that it is merely the chicken
moving in his struggles to escape, the bird grips
the harder, and is pulled to the hole, when the man
below seizes it by the legs, and its liberty is over.
The Chitralis are wonderfully clever at breaking their
birds—I have seen one flown captured not fully a
week—and trust for taming them to keeping them
awake. They keep the bird awake for about three
nights, constantly talking to it, and, finally, when

423 it is tamed by want of sleep and hunger, begin to feed it, and to use the lure. The large grey falcon they mostly use is a lovely bird, and they are devoted to the sport.

The Mehtar used to go after chikor every day almost, and we once got an excellent exposition of the sport in his company. We rode up the valley a short way, and took our stand on the edge of a very steep fan, beaters having gone a couple of miles further up the valley to move chikor, the mountain partridge. In a few minutes we saw a covey coming ~~skimming along following the contour of the hills~~ as they always fly to avoid the dangerous open, and going the pace driven partridges can go. The Mehtar unhooded his falcon, and stood at the edge of the cliff, eagerly watching the approaching birds; as they passed there was a quick move of the wrist, and the grey death shot down like a passing shadow, and killed a couple of hundred yards from us. This was repeated again and again, generally with success, but a falcon loosed a moment too late had no chance. I had a beautiful falcon given me, and had some very good sport with it sometimes, but my native friends coveted it so dreadfully, and begged for it so persistently, that I finally had to give it away.

132
291 The winter was now coming on, though it was but the beginning of October, and we had heavy falls of snow on the higher hills, which made the weather perfect, but rather cold at night. The Chitralis began to dress accordingly, and in addition to the ordinary brown woollen gown, which all classes wear, we now saw bright cotton-wadded coats of flowered green or pink.